

Thrive

SUMMER 2015

[with Heart Disorders]



Stop the Sadness

How to handle stress and sorrow on your own or with a helping hand

We all experience stress and sadness: Work problems, health issues, loss of a loved one and financial troubles can make us feel anxious or trigger the blues. Nearly one out of every four Americans feels stressed out, according to the American Psychological Association.

Chronic stress can cause symptoms ranging from moodiness and racing thoughts to chest pain and fatigue. If left unchecked, it can lead to serious health issues such as heart disease, depression and autoimmune disorders.

But Jeffrey Lieberman, MD, former president of the American Psychiatric Association, says anxiety and unhappiness might not always be cause for concern.

How do you know when stress and sadness are normal emotional responses and when they might be signs of a mental health issue that requires treatment?

Dr. Lieberman lists three signs that you may need to seek help: Feelings of stress and sadness last for several weeks; the emotions lead to unhealthy behaviors like excessive drinking or drug usage, or thoughts of suicide; **continued on next page**

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and your reaction to the stressor is disproportionate to the event (like plotting violent revenge against your former boss after losing your job).

The most important question, according to Dr. Lieberman: "Is the event or your reaction to it distressing to you?"

If so, there is hope. It's possible to prevent stress and sadness from taking over your life.

What You Can Do About Stress

Try these four strategies to keep stress in check:

Sleep well. A lack of sleep amplifies the impact of stress, Dr. Lieberman says. Aim for seven to nine hours of sleep per night. For a restful slumber, avoid caffeine in the evening, don't watch TV in the bedroom, and sleep in a cool, dark room.

Exercise. Regular exercise has been shown to reduce stress hormones. "It releases endorphins that have a euphoric effect," Dr. Lieberman says. To prevent stress from affecting your health, try to get at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise per day.

Take a deep breath. Deep-breathing exercises trigger a relaxation response. This simple tool can be used anytime, anywhere. Start by inhaling deeply and then letting out a long, slow exhale. Repeat several times.

Ask for help. The worst thing you can do is ignore ongoing stress or sadness and hope that you'll get over it, Dr. Lieberman says. "People often rationalize or minimize their feelings or procrastinate about getting help," he says. "Don't wait until it's so severe that it takes over your life. There is nothing wrong with making an appointment to get help."



Manage Stress Naturally

Parrish Health & Fitness Center offers unique classes to help you cope with stress, whether you prefer fast-paced Zumba, meditation or aqua therapy. Visit parrishhealthandfitness.com to view the events calendar and discover what makes you feel most at ease.

Healthy Living



Take Care of Chest Pain

When it comes to chest pain, don't ignore it or let "call the doctor" slide to the bottom of your to-do list. "Women, who are typically so focused on caring for others, seem to minimize symptoms when they report feeling chest pain," says Deirdre Mattina, MD, an American College of Cardiology spokeswoman.

Establish a relationship with a primary care provider so that you can keep track of ongoing issues. And don't be afraid to admit when your body just doesn't feel right.

Severe chest pain can be a sign of a significant health issue, says Norman Edelman, MD, a senior medical consultant for the American Lung Association. "If it's unbearable, or getting worse rapidly, go to the emergency room," he says. "It's not the kind of pain you can deal with on your own."

You and Your Joints

FREE EVENT: Learn how small changes in lifestyle can keep you moving.

Tuesday, Aug. 11, 5–7:30 p.m.

parrishthrive.com/events



HealthBridge is a free portal for customized healthcare information you can access anytime, anywhere.

“While vacationing in Mexico, I had a heart attack. I was so afraid of having another one that I stopped doing everything. I got up to over 300 pounds. My doctor told me to do something about my weight or he’d see me in another year with another heart attack. I changed the way I eat, and I’ve lost 65 pounds. My blood pressure has dropped dramatically, and I don’t even need medication for my diabetes any longer.”

—Dave, 67

“I was born with a heart arrhythmia. My heart would race up to 220 beats per minute for no reason. Luckily, breathing exercises helped slow down my heartbeat and prevented me from passing out. But when it started interfering with my life more, I opted to have heart surgery at age 25. The surgery allowed me to start working out a lot more, and as long as I keep my stress levels down, my symptoms are almost nonexistent.”

—Amanda, 34

True Tales from the Heart

Five heart disease survivors
share how they overcame
their conditions by
making real changes
in their lives

“I was having a hard time breathing and just felt lousy. I went to the doctor and ended up having bypass surgery. Now I watch what I eat. I try to stay away from a lot of salt and red meat. I also eat a lot of raw vegetables and stay active working at my church.”

—Ted, 68

“I’ve had high cholesterol since I was 35. I’ve tried many different medications to lower it, but I get all the side effects. So I’ve gone the natural route instead. I watch what I eat. I also try to stay active. If I could take a pill and be done with it, I would. But this is what works for me.”

—Sue, 58

“My brother took me for a screening, and they found blockages in my blood vessels. So I started taking medication for high cholesterol. Now, when I get it checked, my numbers are good. I probably should have seen the doctor a lot sooner!”

—Russ, 69



Thrive is published as a service to friends and neighbors by Parrish Medical Center, 951 N. Washington Ave., Titusville, FL 32796. Material in *Thrive* is obtained from a wide range of medical scientists and healthcare authorities. If you have any concerns about specific items that appear in *Thrive*, consult your personal physician about their effects on your health. © 2015 McMURRY/TMG, LLC

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Thrive

Can taking a fish oil supplement save my heart?

The omega-3 fatty acids in fish have been associated with a decreased risk of heart disease, but supplement capsules aren't cure-alls. And consuming too much fish oil can increase your risk of a stroke.

The American Heart Association recommends that people without documented heart disease get their fish oil the old-fashioned way: by eating fish at least twice a week. Those who have a diagnosis of coronary artery disease or high triglycerides (blood fat) need higher levels of omega-3s, so supplements may be a good idea. Just make sure a physician signs off on and supervises the plan.

